2: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1956
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643 644 431 thanking, and then all thundered the thanking together. This included all the rest who were in the neighbourhood though they did not take part in the feast or the present. The leader would first thank '*E-Jere*' and then all would follow together, '*E-Jere*', or the clan name of the one who was the giver. The Paramount, if he gave presents to the people, was not thanked by his clan name as other people. He was thanked by '*Bayete*' as was done when saluting him. Likewise those who received the title *Nkosa* were thanked by that title when they gave presents to people.

643 644 533 576 On ceremonial occasions, visitors to the royal village heard the *izibongo* or praise-songs of the Paramount. These were songs referring to great deeds and notable incidents both in the lifetime of the reigning Paramount and in the lives of his predecessors. They were distinct from the *izinkomo*, which were honorific epithets added to the clan name and spoken when thanking a well-known man or woman for their gifts. The *izinkomo* could be said by anyone, since each person of note had his own which were well known. The *izibongo* could only be spoken or sung by an *umbongi* or official 'praiser'. Such a person was a man of good [826] memory and possessing eloquence. The chest was thought to be the seat of wisdom and eloquence, and a man who composed praise-songs, as distinct from repeating well-known ones, had to have the faculty of finding the right words, since new songs of this kind were generally invented on a sudden inspiration.

The occasions when the praise-songs were recited were when important visitors came to the royal village; when beasts were slaughtered in the ancestor cult; at special dances at the royal village or at the feasts of the Paramount. On such occasions the official praiser stood up in the kraal, everyone kept silence and did not move, and after a pause he began to call out '*Bayakonga tekosi*', 'let us praise the Paramount'. In repeating the praise-songs he began with those of the immediate ancestor of the Paramount, and then went on to those of earlier ancestors. At the end he shouted '*Bayete*' and all the people replied '*Bayete*'. Examples of the praise-songs of Zwangendaba and his father Hlacwayo of the northern kingdom and of Ngwana, father of Mpezu, of the central Ngoni kingdom are given at the end of the chapter.

643 644 522 The tension caused by the extreme formality in the behaviour of the Paramount, his courtiers and his visitors was lightened by the presence of a court jester. Informants were agreed that such an individual was usually present to amuse the Paramount with his sallies and gestures and clown-like tumbling about. Dr. Laws referred to such a jester at the court of Mtelela I when the Livingstonia Mission was making its first settlement in northern Nyasaland.[1] I saw a jester who came with Paramount Zimtumbira Mzeeko from Portuguese territory when he and his officials visited Mzikhatha for the war-dance at the mourning for Bandwe

[1] Livingstone, W. P. *Laws of Livingstonia*. London, Hodder & Stoughton, 1921, p. 200.

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Manga. It was a time of great emotional tension and strain, and the absurdities of the jester relieved the solemnity and formality of the visit. This jester was said by informants to be a man of the Moyo clan, who owed his position not to hereditary right but to a ready and witty tongue.

The death of the Paramount

It is in the ceremonies at the death of the Paramount that we find some major differences between the traditional practices of the northern and central Ngoni peoples, which might be attributed to the separate groups in Natal from which they came. I was living in Mcakatha village in the central kingdom at the time of the sickness and death of Bambo Manga, the most important of the royal women among the central Ngoni. The ritual ceremonies at her funeral were said to be almost identical with those at the death of the Paramount, and I was able to check details of similarity and difference with old men who remembered the death of Cikusi, the last Ngoni Paramount in the central kingdom for whom the full ritual was carried out. I was not able after that to pursue further possible parallels and differences among the northern Ngoni. My general impression from informants was that among the northern Ngoni the ritual at the death of a Paramount differed from that of any other prominent man only in certain details of the period and form of mourning. Among the central Ngoni, as Rattray said in a note on the text which will be given, 'such funerals were more of a military pageant than anything else. All outward signs of grief were rigorously excluded.' I can confirm that from my observations at the death of Bambo Manga.

When the Paramount became ill, a diviner was called to give advice. He might advise that a sacrifice should be made to the ancestor spirits. He might suggest witchcraft as the cause of illness. He might advise calling in a man to give medicine to the Paramount. When, in spite of sacrifices and treatment, the Paramount died, the announcement was made from the edge of his village: *Isulu lidilikile*, 'the heaven has fallen down'. Messengers were sent to all the chiefs and to all the *alumuzana* and other leading men. From the edge of each central village the cry was made, and each chief and *mdumuzana* sent his messengers to make the same announcement in each of the villages under him.

Among the northern Ngoni the actual ceremony of burial does not appear to have been very different from that of any other important man, with one exception, that the Paramount, like other ruling Jere chiefs, was buried at the edge of the cattle kraal in a circular pit of the kind used when digging clay for mudding houses, on one side of which there was a niche where the corpse was placed in a sitting position, facing south-east. This burying in a circular grave on the edge of the kraal was the procedure which I witnessed at the burial of Bambo Manga among the central Ngoni (see below p. 75).